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USER MAGAZINE & THE NEW Sinclair

COMPUTER
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The newsletter of "SINCUS" - Sinclair Computer Users Society
All articles are the expressed ideas of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the membership of SINCUS
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LPRINT TS1500 INNOVATIONS

from Baron's MicroComputing Reports (Jan '84)

TS 1500 INNOVATIONS by John Hodgson, Technical Editor (TIMEX-Sinclair)

Now that users have had a chance to make close inspections of the new TS1500 production models, a few changes made by TIMEX to the ROM operating system have come to light.

Dave Wood of SiriusWare in Lexington, Mass. has tracked down some changes. Two involve fixing bugs in the TS1000 operating system. Another modification involved the initialization routines. The 1500 has been redesigned to use the TS solid state cartridges. The new utilization routine checks to see whether a cartridge is in place and if so, it runs its program.

However, one change made by TIMEX may cause some problems. As a result of updating the initialization section, another routine had to be adjusted. In making the adjustment, however, the programmers seem to have made a mistake. This is apparant when a LOAD is stopped in progress, either because the operator hits "break" or because the LOAD fails, and the computer is supposed to jump back to the NEW routine. In the TS1500, unfortunately, the computer jumps to the wrong place. As a result, the computer "crashes" and must be turned off, then back on again, to regain control.

This is no great problem to the average user who simply loads a single program. But it can be very frustrating for the more advanced user, who loads data and then loads another program to manipulate the data.

There is no foolproof solution to this problem. The "bug" cannot be fixed by the user because it's on the ROM chip. To minimize the problem, be more cautious when doing multiple loads. Always be certain that you have backup copies of all data.

(Ed. note - Carl Morris has purchased a 1500 - they are also in the Sears Spring catalog, available from TIMEX plus other sources - and he has had this experience with crashes when the LOAD stops)

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COMING: APRIL 17, 1984 at 7:30 P.M.

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ON
COMPUTERS

CHANNEL 46 WSKG-TV PBS

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SERIES WILL INCLUDE TELEPHONE HOTLINE

TIMEXLY TIPS

BY GARY ENNIS

READ:

DO YOU BELONG TO THE TIMEX COMPUTER CLUB & RECEIVE "RAMBLINGS"? I WILL HAVE COPIES AT THE NEXT MEETINGS.

JUST STARTING OUT?

PICK UP A COPY OF "FAMILY COMPUTING" ONLY \$1.95 AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSTAND!!
MARCH ISSUE FEATURES AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LADY WHO WROTE "RIVER RAID". (ED)
NOTE - IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT "RIVER RAID" IS ASK A TEENAGER!

EDITOR'S NOTES -

We need YOUR contributions here. I can fill the page with TIPS on the 2068, but I am out of touch with the TS1000, ZX81, TS1500 now!

SO PLEASE SEND ME YOUR TIMEYLY TIPS!!!!!!

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IS THE MACINTOSH A MILESTONE?

IS THE MACINTOSH A MILESTONE by Scott Mace, INFOWorld (Feb 13, 1984)

Writing this in the wee hours of a January morning, after having spent more than a week using and writing about Apple's new Macintosh computer, we feel some camaraderie with the 100 or so developers at Apple who gave up their nights and weekends for the past three years.

Whatever the shortcomings of the Macintosh, at first glance it appears to be everything Apple said it would be—transportable, easy to use, and most of all, affordable. For that, the Macintosh group at Apple deserves our congratulations for breaking the mold of "me-too" personal-computer products. For that, they deserve a vacation and a raise in pay.

If nothing else, the distinctive Macintosh user interface makes computing a bit more fun. Around "Infoworld", folks who normally shy away from computers have been playing with the Mac, seeing what it can do and loving every minute of it.

But the congratulations of an adoring public (and the sulking competition) cannot be cause for complacency at Apple. In fact, what chairman Steve Jobs calls the third milestone in personal computing may only be the opening round in the next series of battles.

Jobs is fond of comparing personal computers to the telegraph machines that spanned the country in the mid-1800s. Telegraphs could only be operated by a trained few, despite predictions that every office in America would have a telegraph on each desk, it never happened.

Jobs likens the Macintosh and the emerging Apple 32-bit family to the telephone, which became accepted nationwide a few years after its introduction, casting aside the more complicated telegraphs.

By making that analogy, Jobs is claiming that the Macintosh will do to computing what the telephone did to communications. But, despite the wonders of the Mac, it only leaves us wanting more.

As easy as Mac is to use, it still doesn't squarely address the real problem with personal computers, which is convincing the whole American public that everyone needs a computer. Think of the telephone. It fulfills a basic need: to communicate with others via voice over long distances.

Can anyone reduce the function of personal computers to something as simple? We think not. At best, we can name popular uses: word processing, financial analysis, accounting, filing, communications, education, and entertainment.

One way to demonstrate to the average consumer what computers are good for would be to constrain computers to perform a few tasks well, just as the telephone does. It is important that computers be easy to use, but it is equally important that they do something useful.

Another alternative is to market the heck out of the machine. Both Apple and IBM are going to do that this year, anyway. It should be interesting to see if the massive advertising campaigns persuade people that computers are useful, as well as technologically neat, well priced, user friendly, better than the brand-X and ad infinitum.

We're not saying that the Macintosh is not a useful tool—far from it. But we hope that Apple and other companies keep trying to extend the usefulness of computers, as well as continuing to concentrate on new ways of interacting with those computers.

With the Macintosh, Apple may convince a million or so doubting citizens that computing is useful and easy. It's a good step in the right direction. We still think the best is yet to come.

CAN LITTLE TRAMP SELL A COMPUTER?

CAN LITTLE TRAMP SELL A COMPUTER by Robert Garfield from USA TODAY(1/25)

There he was finally: a perambulator-pushing Charlie Chaplin (played by Billy Scuddy) ushering the IBM PCjr into the home computer world.

The ad campaign-estimated to cost \$40 million-broke on Super Bowl Sunday, no doubt to the substantial relief of Apple, Commodore, Coleco, Timex and Tandy.

They've all been getting nervous stomachs over IBM Corp.'s foray into the home computer marketplace-not only for fear of competing against the most formidable initials in the business world, but also on the chance that IBM had found the answer that has eluded everybody else: HOW TO PEDdle HOME COMPUTERS TO MILLIONS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE. (EMPHASIS by editor!)

Well, it looks like the competition can relax.

IBM hasn't come up with a way to mass merchandise the things either.

For people considering a home-computer purchase, the IBM ads will say why to buy IBM.

But for the majority of us who can't imagine why we'd need a computer, IBM offers no new reasons to shell out \$1,000.

"I'd be the first to agree that not everyone in the United States needs one today," says Douglas R LeGrande, vice president of operations at IBM's Entry Systems Division. "We think there is a big number of people who are interested. We're not sure what the next step is."

This isn't to say IBM is just going to stack retail shelves with the PCjr and let the microchips fall where they may.

For one thing, the company hopes the Little Tramp will entertain and engage Mr. and Mrs. Average Consumer into at least investigating the home computer's possibilities. And beyond highlighting (education and personal finance), the new campaign will painstakingly mine the rich gold vein that is the IBM name.

"We're talking about it as the newest member of the IBM family," says LeGrande. When you buy the "bright little addition" you get more than a microcomputer, you get access to the whole IBM family and its resources.

That means a wide array of software and compatibility with other IBM gear. It means your computer manufacturer won't go bellyup in a year's time. And it means one other thing which LeGrande calls "protected investment"

"IBM's promise is that-unlike the 8mm movie camera stuffed on the top shelf of your closet-people will be using the PCjr more and more over time.

"We think it's very, very, very important," LeGrande says, "and we spend a great deal of time and effort making sure that people who buy a personal computer get their money's worth."

So future advertising, a toll-free customer service number and IBM computer centers, the company will keep you updated on how to make your computer ever more useful.

In that effort, however, IBM has a long way to go.

After home budgeting and education-made-fun, LeGrande could think of only one more compelling reason for the average consumer to become computerized-and you could make a rational argument that "keeping track of names and addresses" isn't all that compelling!

SOFTWARE REVIEW: VU-FILE

BY GARY

SOFTWARE TITLE: VU-FILE

HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS: TS 2068 and preferably the TIMEY 2040 printer
"The Organizer" is available for the TS1000/1500

MANUFACTURED BY: TIMEY

COST: VU-FILE for 2068 cassette \$24.99

VU-FILE for 2068 cartridge \$34.99

The Organizer for TS1000/1500 - about \$15.00 cassette only

If you have now or wish you had a 3X5 card file on anything this program is for you! It really expresses the power of a computer. You can see it at the club meeting as I have used it to maintain the file on the membership and produce the mailing labels on this newsletter. (When I get my peel-off mailing labels from E. Arthur Brown it will really pay off!) So what is all of the excitement.

First, you design a 3x5 card for a card file - making certain you do not go more than 32 characters across and 20 lines down. Make sure you count enough spaces for the probable length of your answers to be filled in.

For example let's layout a simple name and address and phone number and age record. The word "record" must now be applied to each card - all of the cards will become the "file". So let's lay it out:

NAME: (1)
STREET : (2)
R.D.#/Box: (3)
City : (4)
State : (5)
Zip Code : (6)
Phone number : (7)
Age: (8)

VU-FILE permits you to layout the format anyway you want-including the use of any colors for background (PAPER) or INK (the color you print in).

Then you may layout a PRINTER FORMAT which in this case shall be our mailing labels. But a problem - you don't want to have your age and phone number printed out on a mailing label right? Not to worry VU-FILE allows you to format the PRINTER OUTPUT. First, rearrange so that we get the address printed in a reasonable manner, then stick the print position for age and phone number off in the lower right hand margin below the line that you want the mailing label to be:

(1)
(2)
(3)
(4)

(5)
(6)

(7)/(8)

In the printer format you could, of course, set up categories, but you would not want a mailing label to read "NAME: John Smith"! So pass through the step that asks for you to type in titles and just

just mark the start of each "field" or the name, street, city, state, zip code - these are "fields of information". So now you must keep track of "files", "records" and "fields".

We now have our formats - and they are changeable if you have overlooked something (like starting the field for "state" too close to the "field" for "city" so that NEW wipes out "TON" in Binghamton!)

Now comes the most important reason people do not want to start a "computerized record system" - entering the DATA (or the names, addresses, cities, states, zip codes, phone numbers and ages - these are all DATA). The typing is made easier since VU-FILE automatically moves your cursor to the next "field" when you press ENTER. That is to say when you set up the original card format you were asked to mark the start of each "field" - meaning the place where you would start typing the name, street, city, etc. Now when you Enter a record you just type the information for the "field of information" press ENTER and the cursor moves to the start of the next field!

Having typed in all of the names, addresses, etc. you are now ready to use the "Manipulative powers of the computer". First, at the top of the screen are a group of words - each word is a separate manipulative routine. All you need do is press the first letter of the word of the command you want and the 2068 takes off at full speed. Enter will get you a blank "record" where you can enter a new record. Delete will get you the prompt "Press ENTER to Delete the record" - press ENTER and that record is gone! Inform gets you a status report on the file - i.e. how many records, with how many fields, how much memory used and how much memory left. Copy prints a copy of the record while Print prints our mailing label. Alter allows you to move through the record and make any changes (like changing the address). Forward or Back moves you to the next record in that direction - that will depend on which "field" the records are Ordered in! The records are always Ordered alphabetically or numerically by one field i.e. last name, zip code, whatever YOU have chosen (or forgotten NOT to choose!). Quit will take you back to the main menu which on the 2068 version allows you to SAVE this file to tape and then LOAD another file or set of records to manipulate. Order is the command that asks you to pick the "field" you want the "records" ORDERED by! So we can now Order up our records alphabetically by last name, or grouped by city, or grouped by zip code. To facilitate mailing you would Order up your records by the "field" of information "ZIP CODE". Imagine you going through 150 3X5 cards and sorting them out by zip code. The TS 2068 does this so fast - IT IS DONE BEFORE YOU CAN LOOK UP TO THE SCREEN AFTER PRESSING ENTER! Reset simply returns you to the first "record" in the sequence - according to how you have "Ordered" the files! Select is one of the most powerful demonstrations of the real power of a computer - the TS2068 will "Search" all records and find any "Records" that have a particular "string" in them. In other words you press Select and in answer to the prompt you move the cursor to telephone number and press ENTER. The prompt asks for a "string" and you type in "785" - when you press enter you get the phone number of the lowest value that starts with "785"; all other "785" numbers can be seen by pressing "ENTER"!

"VU-FILE" is a powerful tool - giving you the powers that cost many dollars more on competitive computers. This power does require that you sit down and set up some "dummy" files and formats and read the instructions over again. If you will invest some study time you will gain incredible power!

2K E W P A E S

BY GARY ENNIS
EDITOR, SINCUS

EDIT-let me first thank all of those great friends who expressed their sorrow at the news of my mother's death. If you ever wanted a testimony to that "lousy" keyboard you should have seen my 75 pound mom debilitated by arthritis press those membrane keys with the eraser of her pencil!

DELETE - my efforts to contact TIMEY-Sinclair user magazine have drawn deaf ears at the distributor. They keep referring me to Steve Voit, 1-800-343-6474, ext 419 - but he's always "out of town". A check I wrote to them back on November 23, 1983 still has not been cashed! No rumors here, just the facts-last issue received volume #1, number 6. I purchased volume #1, number 7 at a local newstand, but they get their magazines from a different source. Their source has not yet replied to my inquiry (isn't a small town great?).

FAST-Two days ago I ordered a lot of software through the Sears Catalog store. Tonight I got the message that a partial order is IN. Come out Wednesday night to see what it is!! Believe me you will be impressed with the software for the 2068!!!

PAUSE-I have written for a catalog that lists the 2068 for \$148.32.

READ-my review of "VU-FILE" - if you have a piece of software that you like then use my format to write a description of what you like or do not like about the particular product you are using.

NEW - the academy of computers is not, I do not think the same as the program BITS, BYTES, AND BUZZWORDS on PBS television. Call WSKG and ask

THEN - the operating system CP/M is based on the Z80 - in fact CP/M-80 which has the operating system and processor integrated on one chip was just announced by DIGITAL RESEARCH for specific use in the home computer

QUESTION- a recent magazine surveyed all "computers in the \$4,000 to 8,000 range. Half were 8 bit processors - every 8 bit processor was a Z-80! Why are Apple and Commodore hopping to sell a Z80 card for their computers?

I GIVE UP - my proposed discussion of MSX for this month's column is a bit weak - my premise had been that MSX appears to be based on the Z80. MSX is the operating system that has been adopted by JAPAN as the one that their computers must be compatible with - the new line of Japanese home computers that will be competing with the TS 2068.

GREAT "MARKS" -- articles on the TS 2068 in "SYNC" magazine were very positive. The article last fall in "Computer and Electronics" was very positive. But the TS 2068 gets rave reviews by INFOworld and Family Computing:

INFOworld: SETUP:excellent - EASE OF USE: excellent - PERFORMANCE: excellent - DOCUMENTATION: excellent - SERVICEABILITY: excellent - "TIMEY's 2068 Personal Color Computer is an excellent product, which compares well with computers costing far more. It has features that make it attractive to a wide audience, from beginners to assembly-language programmers. For under \$200 you get a lot of computer.

(continued next page)

Review of the TIMEY-Sinclair 2068 (continued)

FAMILY COMPUTING magazine:

Statements like "A powerful, easy to use computer-^{WHEN} it comes to ease of handling, the TS 2068 stands near the head of its class.-it weighs in at three and a half pounds but it is no light weight when it comes to computer power!"

REM - with crystal ball gazing it becomes apparant to me that we are on the edge of a steady two year growth in the home computer "business". If you will read the articles on the PCjr and the Mac you will see that there is some question as to whether or not the public feels a need to be "computerized".

I still stick to my basic assumptions:

(1) Most people would spend \$500 on a home computer if you showed them three things it would do for them BESIDES video games! You better do more than three reasons if you expect to sell them a system that is going to cost more than \$1,000. Your best selling point is telecommunications for the \$500 system so be ready to demonstrate it!

(2) External storage devices will evolve away from disk (as we know it today) toward "wafer-disks" (actually a closed loop high speed cassette drive) and then back to optical disks that produce pictures (real pictures) as the graphics!

(3) SINCLAIR is still an important name in microcomputers.

NEW NEWS - Sinclair Research will ship a new \$499 microcomputer, the Sinclair QL (Quantum Leap) to American consumers this fall, announced the firm's chairman, Sir Clive Sinclair. Sinclair made his remarks at a London news conference introducing the machine to the British market.

Slated for delivery to British users late this month, the QL features 128K RAM (expandable to 640K and twin micro (wafer-tape) drives with 100K each. The drives are integral to the keyboard system which weighs only three pounds.

The microcomputer runs Sinclair's propriety QDOS operating system and Superbasic, an enhanced version of the company's Basic language.

Although TIMEY Corporation manufactures and distributes Sinclair's T/S1000 and Spectrum computers, it is not currently involved with the QL. Thorn E.M.I., the British consumer electronics firm is manufacturing the machine, and Sinclair plans to handle initial U.S. distribution itself (mail order only). "The QL was not in the joint product marketing agreement with TIMEX," said Sinclair. This agreement covers only Sinclairs "home" computers and not its "business" computers such as the "QL".

During the London press conference the company gave a demonstration of the machines multitasking capability, which allows the system to perform several tasks at once. A split CRT screen ran a different program part in each of six "windows". Sinclair claimed the system could concurrently process up to 20 programs. The system comes with a full size keyboard, and four basic software packages, a wordprocessor a spreadsheet, a data base management system with relational properties and its own screen editor: and a graphics package.

Sir Clive compared the QL with the Apple IIe, priced five times higher, and the IBM PC priced seven times higher than the QL.

If Sinclair delivers, sources in London believe the QL will redefine the microcomputer industry's price/performance standards. Competitors would have a hard time keeping up.

(ED. NOTE - there was more, it uses a 68000 32-bit chip! *GE*)

—SINCUS MEETING—

WED-FEBRUARY 15-6:30

VESTAL LIBRARY

DEMO: JERRY KENDRICK'S
SOUPED UP ZX81

A "SNOWCHECK" FROM JANUARY MEETING

ALSO: TS2068 WITH MONITOR & PRINTER

SINCUS
NEWS



SINCLAIR COMPUTER USERS SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 36 JOHNSON CITY, NY 13790